

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Ault Inc

Minnesota Technology Inc.

#### Ault Inc. Targets New Business Opportunities

##### Client Profile:

Ault Inc. is North America's largest independent manufacturer of external power supplies, transformers and battery chargers, which are used by OEMs in the United States, Europe and Asia to change the voltages supplied by power companies to the lower voltages needed to power OEM products. It is a fast-growing, increasingly competitive industry, in which OEMs are on the lookout for external power-supply solutions that take up minimal space but provide maximum power and efficiency. Based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with production facilities in China, the company employs 122 people.

##### Situation:

Ault was slowly being swallowed by an intensifying flow of quotation requests from customers, especially manufacturers of such medical devices as respirators and imaging devices. Ault, however, didn't have an efficient method for analyzing its business opportunities. Consequently, the firm struggled to properly identify the most promising prospects and maximize its engineering resources and production capabilities. "We were having trouble coming to grips with the number of projects we were undertaking," said Tim Cassidy, Vice President of Engineering. "We decided we needed a new product-development process that would help us do a better job of determining what business we should pursue." Ault Inc. turned to Minnesota Technology Inc. (MTI), a NIST MEP network, for help.

##### Solution:

MTI worked with Ault to devise and implement a customized version of MTI's Accelerate to Market -- Small to Medium Enterprises (ATOM-SME) new-product development process. Cassidy says the new process improved on Ault's previous product-development approach in two key ways. "First," he said, "it gave us a better framework for opportunity analysis. It brought more of a balanced scorecard approach by emphasizing certain metrics, particularly financial metrics, such as net present value calculations, cash flow considerations and payback periods. Our financial analysis just wasn't that sophisticated in the past." "In addition," Cassidy explained, "the new process emphasized the importance of portfolio analysis. Our previous process had us making decisions on projects on a case-by-case basis. We looked at each one independent from everything else. With this process, we've been able to focus on the portfolio of projects that are being undertaken. It helps us look at our resource loading and the consequences of talking a project and what it could potentially displace in our existing portfolio."

##### Results:

- \* Saved time and money using analysis tool to target profitable business opportunities.
- \* Provided training for sales and engineering staff.

##### Testimonial:

[www.mep.nist.gov](http://www.mep.nist.gov)



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"We had a really good experience working with MTI. Their staff brought our executive team together and clearly showed where the problems were with our existing systems, and he very clearly identified what would need to happen in order for us to improve. Then he showed us how to use the tools. And beyond executive management, they provided a broader level of training to our sales and engineering staff. With that combined effort, MTI helped a lot of people see the value of more rigorous opportunity analysis, and the process has started to take hold."

Tim Cassidy, Vice President of Engineering